

My dearest Dolls,

"A scary picture of Brian and Amanda," hmm? Well, I can't draw for shit. But I've been doing rather a lot of writing lately. So I thought I would "draw you a picture with words." I know this isn't exactly what you had in mind, so I tried to make it **extra** scary. I sincerely hope you hate it.

Love,
steve

Duet, In a Minor Key

Brian bounced into the office, all pent-up adrenaline spazz. "I'm ready for rehearsal, boss!" Amanda didn't even look up from the screen.

"Are you insane? I don't have time to *play*. I have three contracts to read—I'm convinced this distributor is trying to screw us, but I can't see how—and I'm supposed to do phone interviews with a newspaper in Des Moines and a radio station in Sacramento. You should start putting together those T-shirt orders."

"Um, Amanda? We agreed we were gonna work up at least one new song for this next round..."

"No new songs," she cut him off sharply. "We don't even have time to practice the songs we know."

"But I'm *bored* with those songs. We've been playing those same songs for, like, three years now."

"You think you're bored with them? I wrote them, and I hate them. But who's going to write these magic new songs that we're supposedly going to magically learn to play?"

Brian sat down heavily. "This sucks." He sounded petulant, even to himself.

"You wanted to be a rock star."

"I wanted to be a musician. I thought there might be music involved somehow."

"Oh, grow up! This is our job now. This is what you do. You don't have to like it; you just have to do it."

They glared at each other for a long, painful moment. Both looked down, slightly shamed, at exactly the same instant. That much, at least, of their fabled chemistry was still intact.